



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release**  
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### **Chinook Salmon Begin Migration Up Russian River**

#### ***Agency, County Sheriff's Department to Fend off Poachers***

Santa Rosa, CA – Threatened Chinook salmon have begun their annual journey up the Russian River to their natal spawning habitat in the Russian River Watershed. As of November 19, approximately 3,252 Chinook salmon have passed through the Agency's fish ladder at its Wohler facilities on the Russian River. This year, the Chinook may notice a new presence during their migration; Sonoma County Sheriff Deputies patrolling the Russian River in an effort to fend off poachers. The Sonoma County Water Agency (Agency) and the Sonoma County Sheriff's Department are working together under a new program called, The Russian River Chinook Recovery and Enforcement Program. The program's goal is to educate the public about Chinook salmon's endangered species status in the Russian River and to enforce the regulations that protect them.

"Chinook salmon are a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act and the migration season is essential to the species' survival," said Sean White, Principal Environmental Specialist. "The Agency is partnering with the Sheriff's Department to educate and enforce regulations that protect the Chinook salmon."

Chinook migrate up the Russian River in the fall months from September through November. While fishing in the Russian River is open for species such as smallmouth bass during the Chinook migration, fishing for Chinook is prohibited. Sheriff Deputies patrolling the Russian River may ask to see fishing gear to ensure sport fishermen are targeting appropriate species. Targeting steelhead during the Chinook migration period is not recommended. Chinook and steelhead spawners rarely overlap in the Russian River. Fishing for steelhead during the Chinook migration period offers little chance for successful steelhead angling, and plenty of opportunity to impact Chinook. By the time steelhead begin to show in the Russian River in good numbers (late December), the Chinook migration is largely over.

To help replenish the dwindling salmon populations, the Agency has constructed fish ladders, removed dams, restored habitat, and funded recovery programs and studies. These recovery efforts are starting to show signs of success.

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“The Russian River Chinook Recovery and Enforcement Program is one more step towards providing a safe, environmentally stable habitat for Chinook in the Russian River,” said White.

There are both State and Federal laws in place to protect Russian River Chinook salmon.

### **STATE REGULATIONS**

Under current California Department of Fish and Game regulations fishing on the Russian River is open year round for most species. Salmon and steelhead seasons however, are discussed in Chapter 3 of the Freshwater Sportfishing Regulations. In Section 7.00 (a) of Chapter 3 it states that “no trout or salmon may be taken except as provided ...” This section does not provide for any take of Chinook salmon in the Russian River. Chapter 1 of the Fish and Game Code defines take as to “hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill” which clearly prohibits any form of Chinook fishing including catch and release angling.

### **FEDERAL REGULATIONS**

Federal regulations protecting Chinook salmon in the Russian River are enforced by the National Marine Fisheries Service. Again, Chinook are protected from “take” which is defined as to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, collect, or attempt to engage in any such conduct. Any activity that impairs breeding, spawning, rearing, migrating, feeding, or sheltering is considered a “take” under the existing law.

### **THE CHINOOK NEED THE COMMUNITY’S HELP**

Recovering Chinook salmon in the Russian River will require the participation of everyone in our community. Chinook poaching or suspicious activity should be reported to the Sheriff’s Department at **707-565-2121**.

For more information about the Russian River Chinook Recovery and Enforcement Program or other fishery programs, please visit the Sonoma County Water Agency website at **[www.sonomacountywater.org](http://www.sonomacountywater.org)** or call Sean White at **707.547.1908**.

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*Sonoma County Water Agency provides water supply, flood protection and sanitation services for portions of Sonoma and Marin counties. Visit us on the Web at [www.sonomacountywater.org](http://www.sonomacountywater.org).*